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Emphasis

Citizens 'Clean Up City Hall' In Effort To Restore Building

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Politicians are notorious for making campaign promises that they don't keep. During the course of a campaign, the issue of "cleaning up City Hall" inevitably pops up, but it usually is mere campaign rhetoric.

A group of people in Carbondale have grown tired of hearing the same old cliches uttered by the local demagogues and have decided to take matters into their own hands. In fact, they are literally "cleaning up City Hall" starting at its very top.

Is there a revolution taking place in Carbondale? Not exactly, but some dramatic changes are taking place not only inside the walls of the the historic structure but outside the building as well.

The Committee to Restore Carbondale City Hall Inc., formed only a few months ago, intends to restore the public building to its former beauty — no matter how long it takes.

According to David Baum, vice president of the organization, "Our eventual goal is to have the building restored. Everyone realizes that it may take 10 years or more, but the people here are dedicated and will try to see it through."

Over the past several years, the municipal building had been neglected. There was paint peeling from the walls, exterior blemishes, and even the large clock located in the building's tower had stopped running. For a while, at least, it appeared as if no one cared. But that wasn't the case as Baum soon found out.

He wrote an editorial in his Carbondale-based weekly newspaper urging citizens to cooperate and to take pride in their community. Subsequently, the newspaper received a few donations from interested residents. One of those donations was from S. Robert Powell, a historian who publishes the quarterly "Northeastern Pennsylvanian," but who makes his living working on New York's Wall Street. At this point, the two men joined forces and the Committee to Restore Carbondale City Hall was born.

Currently the group has raised more than $6,000 through its fund-raising efforts. At times, the committee has averaged $200 per week in donations. Baum never expected the campaign to generate this much interest. "So far the response has been phenomenal, said Baum. I never thought it would go this far this fast. The people here have really put forth an effort."

When asked why the committee chose to restore City Hall, Baum replied, "One of the reasons we stepped in is because the politicians, or whoever that should have taken the responsibility to care for the building, haven't. They haven't done their job so we stepped in to fill that void."

According to Baum, the fund which was started in November has really "snowballed." He said the enthusiastic response could be attributed to "the fact that people want to see something positive done."

A little over a month ago, City Hall's clock was repaired. For a number of years Carbondale residents would look up at the large clock and wonder why it wasn't running. Today, anyone passing the municipal building can glance at the tower for the correct time. This could be attributed to the efforts of the committee.

Recently, tons of bird dung were removed from the ledges and crevices of the building. These crevices were then boarded up to prevent the birds from further roosting there. One columnist affectionatelydescribed the cleanup as another chapter of "Guano with the Wind."

Despite the obvious remarks one could make about the incident, removing the bird droppings was essential to prevent any potential health hazards for the community. Scientists have discovered that bird droppings can cause histoplasmosis, a disease that creates calcified lesions on the lungs.

Meanwhile, the organization, which has been incorporated by the state of Delaware, has agreed on a number of other renovations for the building. Among these will be roofing repairs, masonry work and interior work on some of the offices in the building.

Currently the National Historic Registry is reviewing the committee's application to place the building on its historical list. According to Baum, the registry has given the building a priority number "which means that the building is important enough to be examined."

Also in the works is a series of informative lectures, cultural events and educational activities that the group hopes to present during the Carbondale Pioneer Days festival. By sponsoring these events, the group intends to inform the public about the historical and local significance of the City Hall building.

As Baum emphasized, "This is the most important story that has come out of this area in a long time. It's a story of people getting behind the project and cooperating to get something positive done."

While most Carbondale residents have dedicated their time and energy to restore the municipal building, the committee has totally involved themselves. Among those are the officers of the group. They include Powell, president-secretary; Baum, vice president, and Thomas Brennan, treasurer.

The committee's board of directors includes Baum, John P. Brennan, Thomas F. Brennan, James Brownell, John V. Buberniak, Joseph Burrell, Jean Colville, Mary Louise Dearie, Nan Loftus, Robert G. Lewis, Jr., Joseph Pascoe, S. Robert Powell, Rev. Claude A. Pullis, and Robert J. Tomaine.